



A quarterly publication for injury and illness prevention

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## MANAGING AND REDUCING STRESS



Stress is an everyday fact of life. When you have too much stress, or it lasts too long, it can be harmful. At work, unmanaged stress can lead to illness or injury, low productivity, and unsafe acts. But not all stress is bad. The best level of stress is that amount which improves a person's performance without causing harmful side effects.

You can manage stress and make it a more positive force in your life when you identify your stressors, understand them, and take charge of the stress by relieving or preventing it. Using alcohol or drugs will not help you manage your stressors. In some cases, it can add to your stress. In any stressful situation, you have choices. You can:

- **Accept it** - Some things are out of your control and all you can do is accept them and learn from them. Seek helpful advice or support from friends or coworkers.
- **Avoid it** - Stay away from recurring situations or sources of constant frustration. Remove yourself from the situation or rearrange your surroundings. For time related stress, plan ahead.
- **Alter it** - Communicate your feelings to your employer or supervisor. Change your feelings or ask someone else to change their behavior. Ask for help with your job or take advantage of the School District's Employee Assistance Program.
- **Adapt to it** - Learn to cope with the situation or look at it as an opportunity. Focus on the positive things in your life. Try to make time for the activities you enjoy. Maintain a healthy lifestyle including exercise, meditation, and a balanced diet.

It is important for everyone to recognize stressful jobs, situations, and signs of stress in themselves or in their coworkers before accidents, injuries, or violent incidences occur.

## SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUES



Back injuries account for about one in every five job-related injuries in California workplaces. Disabling back injuries are no laughing matter for workers who lose time from work or from personal activities. The sad truth is that most of the pain and lost time can be prevented if you are aware of how the back functions and how to lift safely to protect your back.

The back is a network of fragile ligaments, discs, and muscles which can easily be thrown out of order. The back's complex design breaks down when it's forced

to perform activities it was not designed to do. Lifting with the back twisted or bent just begs for a pulled muscle or ruptured disc. One sure way to risk injuring the back is to lift heavy or bulky loads improperly or unassisted. Never be afraid to ask for help with loads that you know you cannot lift safely. Lift with good sense and a little extra help from a co-worker or mechanical aid when necessary.



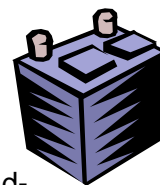
If you decide you are capable of lifting a light load, make sure you lift correctly.

- Move in, so that your feet are close to the base of the object to be lifted.
- Face the object squarely. Bend your knees and squat over the item to be lifted. In this position, the back gets added lifting strength and power from the legs and arms.
- Move up close to the item, because the backbone must act as a supporting column, and it takes the least strain close-in.
- Tilt the item on edge with its long axis straight up so that the center of the weight is as high as possible above the ground.
- Still squatting, the feet should be set with legs pointed right at the load, with the back straightened, the worker may then grasp the load with both arms and slowly stand up with it, pushing up with the leg muscles. If you can't lift slowly, you can't lift safely.

A good way to learn the right from the wrong way to lift is to practice lifting correctly a few times. You will notice that the correct way to lift is the easiest way to lift the load, with the least strain and awkwardness. To lift the wrong way will, over time, cause injury and pain. The back can be damaged quickly but can take a long time to heal.

## BATTERY HANDLING SAFETY

Batteries are used to power our automobiles, trucks, tractors, and construction or power equipment. There are different types of batteries such as lead-acid batteries, gel cells, and lead-calcium batteries. Most batteries contain sulfuric acid and lead. Because batteries contain chemicals, chemical reaction by-products, and an electrical current they can pose a hazard to workers if not handled properly. Workers that operate, maintain, and recharge batteries should use caution.



Before working with a battery, you should have training in proper handling procedures. Consult the vehicle and battery owners' manuals for specific

instructions on battery handling and hazard identification. To avoid splashing acid in your face, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) such as chemical splash goggles and a face shield. Wear acid-resistant equipment such as gauntlet style gloves, an apron, and boots. Do not tuck your pant legs into your boots because spilled acid can form a pool in your boots.

Be aware of the chemical hazards posed by batteries. The sulfuric acid (electrolyte) in batteries is highly corrosive. Acid exposure can lead to skin irritation, eye damage, respiratory irritation, and tooth enamel erosion. Never lean over a battery while boosting, testing or charging it. If acid splashes on your skin or eyes, immediately flood the area with cool running water for at least 15 minutes and seek medical attention immediately.

Always practice good hygiene and wash your hands after handling a battery. If you handle the lead plates in a battery and don't wash your hands properly, you could be exposed to lead. Signs of lead exposure include loss of appetite, diarrhea, constipation with cramping, difficulty sleeping, and fatigue.

The chemical reaction by-products from a battery include oxygen and hydrogen gas. These can be explosive at high levels. Overcharging batteries can also create flammable gases. For this reason, it is very important to store and maintain batteries in a well-ventilated work area away from all ignition sources and incompatible materials. Flames or sparks could cause a battery to explode.

Before working on a battery, disconnect the battery cables. To avoid sparking, always disconnect the negative battery cable first and reconnect it last. Be careful with flammable fluids when working on a battery-powered engine. The electrical voltage created by batteries can ignite flammable materials and cause severe burns. Workers have been injured and killed when loose or sparking battery connections ignited gasoline and solvent fumes during vehicle maintenance.

Battery maintenance tools should be covered with several layers of electrical tape to avoid sparking. Place protective rubber boots on battery cable connections to prevent sparking on impact if a tool does accidentally hit a terminal. Clean the battery terminals with a plastic brush because wire brushes could create static and sparks. Always remove your personal jewelry before working on a battery. A short-circuit current can weld a ring or bracelet to metal and cause severe burns.

Batteries can be very dense and heavy, so use proper lifting techniques to avoid back injuries. Battery casings can be brittle and break easily; they should be handled carefully to avoid an acid spill.

Make sure that a battery is properly secured and upright in the vehicle or equipment. If a battery shows signs of damage to the terminals, case or cover, replace it with a new one. Finally, remember to dispose of old batteries properly.

### **SAFETY IS IN YOUR HANDS**

Work can be hard on the hands. Along with the wear and tear of using tools and handling heavy, sharp-edged or coarse equipment, hands are exposed to weather, chemicals, dirt, solvents, fuels, grease, cutters, etc. While your hands are one of the most used part of the body, they are also the most mistreated. Many injuries to the hands can be prevented if you first think about what you're asking your hands to do then make sure they're protected.

**Wear proper hand protection-**Leather gloves can protect your hands in many jobs. They can provide protection when handling rough or abrasive materials and give you better gripping power. They can also protect hands from sharp objects, thorns, and cutting tools. Some gloves are especially designed to protect the hands from solvents, petroleum products, and many chemicals. To work best, gloves should fit correctly. Overly large gloves can interfere with work or get caught in moving parts, putting your hands in danger.



Hand protection can also include specific creams applied before work to guard against dermatitis causing grease, paint, chemicals, etc. A good hand lotion can soothe and moisten dry or cracked hands.

**Keep hands out of harm's way-**Recognize the hazards of the job whether working with sharp objects, cutting tools, chemicals, pinch points or rotating equipment. Follow safety procedures, even if you've gotten away with short cuts before. Even though a job may have its own hazards, basic safety principles should always be remembered.

- Think through each job before you do it, then work carefully and deliberately.
- Keep your hands away from rotating equipment and never use your hands to stop rotating parts.
- When lifting a load, check for protrusions, nails, splinters, screws, broken glass, etc.
- Watch your fingers and hands when lowering heavy loads; they could get pinched.
- Keep your hands away from loads being moved mechanically.
- Never use your fingers to test the temperature of gases, liquids or machinery.
- If you do injure your hand, get prompt treatment and report it to your supervisor.

Your hands are like finely crafted tools of amazing strength and dexterity. They are your most valuable tools. Protect them and keep them safe.

